

REDMOND PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

May 26, 2004

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Snodgrass, Commissioners Allen, Petitpas, Querry

STAFF PRESENT: Lori Peckol, Rob Odle, Terry Shirk, Redmond Planning Department

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Snodgrass in the Public Safety Building Council Chambers. Commissioners Dunn, McCarthy and Parnell were all excused.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The agenda as submitted was approved by acclamation.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

A. April 28, 2004

The minutes as submitted were approved by acclamation.

ITEMS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Several residents spoke under Items from the Audience regarding the proposed Grass Lawn Neighborhood Plan.

Mr. Redmond Sharpe, 14005 NE 77th Street, referred to Item 5 in the summary of the last meeting and noted that traffic would be created along NE 77th Street between Woodford and Greenbrier, not along 140th Avenue NE. If NE 80th Street were closed without traffic calming devices, most of the eastbound traffic will turn right off NE 80th and then left onto NE 77th Street. The cost for improving the corner of NE 80th Street and 140th Avenue NE is \$800,000. If NE 80th is to be closed between 140th Avenue NE and Kirkland-Redmond Road, the high cost should be considered along with the problems that will be created. With regard to people moving through the neighborhood, he noted that there is an existing path along the right-of-way that connects 141st Avenue NE and NE 77th Street. The park at NE 80th is not viable; very few parents let their children play there. There should be access between the various components of the neighborhood, but the Woodford and Greenbrier areas do not have access to Grass Lawn Park; that access needs to be created.

Ms. Stacy Gordon, 14621 NE 76th, spoke as president of the Greenbrier Homeowners Association. She asked the Commission not to allow a commercial zoning on 148th Avenue NE; that would only increase traffic, something the local neighborhood does not need. With regard to the NE 80th Street park, she said it simply will not be used. It would also increase traffic through the local neighborhood.

Chair Snodgrass noted that the proposal for commercial zoning along 148th Avenue NE had been revised by staff to read “Explore opportunities for additional Neighborhood Convenience retail uses to locate within the neighborhood....” and asked if that language would be more acceptable. Ms. Gordon suggested that additional retail of that sort is just not needed in the community.

Mr. Ron Belter, 7357 148th Avenue NE, raised the issue of duplexes, tri-plexes and four-plexes in the neighborhood. He said there are a total of 69 such units in the entire city, 40 of which were built within a four-year timeframe. The last duplex constructed in Redmond was built in 1992. It would appear that the housing type is not something people want in Redmond; accordingly, N-GL-X-3 should be given closer attention. The neighborhood plan should be something the local residents will be proud of 50 years out. The city should exercise its right of eminent domain to obtain the Verizon site on which to create a larger park.

Chair Snodgrass asked why duplexes, tri-plexes and four-plexes do not work in Redmond. Mr. Belter said the owners of the buildings do not all have a common understanding, and the result is inconsistency. Chair Snodgrass asked if antiquated zoning laws that in essence discriminate against multiplexes are the real reason builders choose not to construct them. Mr. Belter said he did not think so; single family residences offer the builder a better return.

Commissioner Allen asked if a single multiplex constructed on a city lot in the Grass Lawn neighborhood as infill development would fit in and be welcomed. Mr. Belter said that would be going backwards in the neighborhood. Grass Lawn was largely built in the 60s and 70s and no new construction of a type that is 30 years old should be permitted. Commissioner Allen asked what type of development should be allowed to take the place of the existing older homes as they are redeveloped. Mr. Belter said single family homes should be replaced with single family homes without increasing density. Commissioner Allen asked what type of construction should be allowed if in fact the city wants to allow an increase in density, and Mr. Belter said if designed to look like a single family home, multiplex units could be acceptable. Design controls on such units in single family neighborhoods will be critical.

Mr. Mark Webster, 7341 148th Avenue NE, agreed that the Verizon property should be acquired by the city for use as a park and as a way to save the wetlands. If there is to be commercial allowed, the businesses there should be required to be shut down for ten hours each day to allow the neighborhood some quiet time.

Mr. Jack Bitner [chair of the Grass Lawn Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)], address not given, suggested that Neighborhood Commercial should be permitted. The real question is where it should be located; it could be a plus for everyone, provided there is a good nighttime closure. He disagreed that closing NE 80th Street would direct traffic onto NE 77th Street. It is just as likely that traffic would go down Redmond Way to get to 140th Avenue NE. With regard to the park issue, he said the focus should be on more than just a place for children to play; it could be nothing more than a quiet place for people to sit and relax, something that would not necessarily generate a lot of traffic. Putting trails through the neighborhood would allow people an opportunity to walk from place to place, keeping cars off the roads. The issue of multiplexes was hotly contested at the CAC level. The pictures of quality multiplex construction shown to the CAC helped to sway their thinking; good design makes all the difference. A crossing on 148th Avenue NE should be created whether or not there is additional action in the park. The new homes being developed on the north end of 148th Avenue NE will generate a new demand for access to the park; an overhead structure would be useful and safe.

Mr. Stu Irvine, address not given, suggested that a crossing of 148th Avenue NE could be in the form of a stoplight at the entrance to proposed multiplex and/or commercial area. However, such a light would be approximately 200 yards from Redmond Way and that could create a significant impact on traffic flow. With regard to allowing commercial in the area, he said the matter is of grave concern to the local residents and should be reconsidered. Those who live in the area do not find it inconvenient to go up to the Bridle Trails shopping area at 132nd Avenue NE. Commercial in the residential area would be a major intrusion; the top concern is additional traffic. The idea of using eminent domain to expand the park is very attractive. The wetland should be preserved in any scenario.

Commissioner Querry asked if a small restaurant or deli would be viewed differently from a convenience store by the local neighborhood, especially if located appropriately so as not to require a stoplight. Mr. Irvine said there are a couple of such uses on 132nd Avenue NE in Bridle Trails that are not doing all that well, largely because of public access.

PUBLIC HEARING AND STUDY SESSION

2003-2004 Comprehensive Plan Update – Housing and Economic Vitality Elements

Chair Snodgrass opened the public hearing on the Housing and Economic Vitality Elements of the Comprehensive Plan, and asked staff to give a brief overview of proposed updates.

Senior Planner Terry Shirk explained that the proposed revisions to the Housing Element of the Comprehensive Plan are intended to remove outdated policies and to focus on the supply of housing, affordability, the jobs/housing balance, special needs, the general dispersal of housing, and innovative housing policies. She said it is important to provide for a wide variety of housing types throughout the community. There is also a section

about community values that calls for ownership housing in a variety of settings, well-designed and character-rich neighborhoods, and a compatible mix of land uses in and around new and existing residential neighborhoods. The policies include development standards to craft regulations and procedures to minimize unnecessary time delays and to make the standards clear for those seeking to build and those reviewing development proposals.

Continuing, Ms. Shirk said one of the most significant changes proposed in response to the Commission's initial direction is the inclusion of policies for innovative housing, including cottage housing, size-limited structures, accessory dwelling units, and multiplex structures of two to four units per building designed to fit with the character and bulk of the existing neighborhoods in which they locate.

Planning Manager Rob Odle provided a brief overview of the proposed Economic Vitality Element. He said the element is required both by the Growth Management Act and the Countywide Planning Policies. The proposed revisions seek to bring clarity to the issues, reduce policy redundancies, and assure consistency with other elements of the Comprehensive Plan. One major theme of economic vitality is that of partnerships between the city, the business community and the residential communities that are necessary in order to succeed. Government in and of itself cannot make economic vitality a reality.

Continuing, Mr. Odle noted that the city does have specific roles to play in addition to participating in partnerships. The Land Use Plan and development regulations play a very large part in bringing about economic vitality. The city must also provide infrastructure and coordinate with private utilities to bring necessary and desired services to all. The city can also act as a catalyst, convener and coordinator for the development of programs consistent with the economic vitality strategy, and can encourage continued provision and enhancement of public and private education throughout the community.

The proposed element stresses the need to protect and provide incubator space in which new businesses can be created and cultivated and remain in the community, providing jobs for people who live in the community.

Mr. Donald Marcy, 524 2nd Avenue, Seattle, spoke on behalf of the Microsoft Corporation. With regard to the introduction section of the Economic Vitality Element he noted that there is a discrepancy between the jobs forecast prepared by Redmond and the one prepared for Redmond by the Puget Sound Regional Council. He noted that Policy EV-1 has a bracketed provision that allows for a mix of uses in a range of zones that allow for the daily needs of residents when consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. The phrase "when consistent with the Comprehensive Plan" appears in one or two other policies as well; the phrase should be deleted, not because consistency is not important but rather because over time economic development and vitality issues will require fine tuning of the Comprehensive Plan, and retaining the phrase may pose a conflict for the future. The first bullet point of Policy EV-4 should be deleted in that it is not consistent with the overall policy direction. In Policy EV-8 the requirement of the first bullet point

does not make sense and should be eliminated; uses not previously contemplated will obviously not be recognized by the Comprehensive Plan.

Turning to the Housing Element, Mr. Marcy said Microsoft has some concerns with the section dealing with the jobs/housing balance. While it is important to have such a balance, the fact is Redmond is home to some very significant employers and it would be difficult to have an exact balance. The neighboring city of Sammamish does not try to match jobs with housing; it has very few jobs and an enormous amount of housing and takes the position that its residents can find work elsewhere. Of most importance is the jobs/housing balance on a regional basis. Policy HO-18 includes Overlake where most of the residential land has already been developed. Microsoft would oppose any regulations allowing additional commercial development only if tied to the creation of additional housing. Policy HO-19 is not necessary given that the city always has the opportunity to look at rezoning property from non-residential to residential uses or vice versa. The intent of Policy HO-20 is unclear and is not necessary. It could be taken so far as to require an employer like Microsoft seeking a site plan review entitlement to build a new building to go through some analysis of housing supply and affordability. The information the policy seeks to compare is very difficult to obtain. Policy HO-21 is also unclear with regard to employer-assisted housing programs; Microsoft would definitely not agree with any attempt to make employers provide housing subsidies for their employees. Policies HO-20 and HO-21 are in conflict with the Economic Vitality Element in that they are both very negative toward businesses.

Ms. Christine Hoffman, 22433 NE Market Place, President and CEO of the Redmond Chamber of Commerce, read into the record a letter written by Daphne Schneider, Chair of the Chamber's Economic Vitality Committee. The letter said the proposed changes and improvements to the Economic Vitality Element of most importance to the Chamber are those focused on continuing support for existing businesses, shifting the attention to future planning of the community, incorporating appropriate manufacturing in the downtown area, emphasizing the partnerships between the city, Chamber and businesses, highlighting the need for a variety of housing options, promotion of higher education opportunities to meet the needs of local businesses, and emphasizing the review of proposed city policies, procedures and programs in terms of their impact on businesses. Throughout the process staff has been very open and quite enthusiastic. Overall the updated element is clearer and easier to understand.

Ms. Hoffman also read into the record a letter from Judith Jewell, Chair of the Chamber's Land Use Committee, in which were highlighted concerns regarding Policy HO-19 matching those voiced by Microsoft.

Mr. Ron Belter, 7357 148th Avenue NE, reiterated his concerns regarding multiunit housing in single family neighborhoods. He suggested that the city should consider initiating incentives for large businesses and the community to work together to acquire open space, greenbelts and possibly enlarge parks. One such incentive might be to allow more dense parking areas for complexes in exchange for a contribution to a fund to help offset the cost of acquiring or maintaining open space and greenbelts.

Mr. Redmond Sharpe, 14005 NE 77th Street, suggested that economic vitality requires a range of people working together. It also requires ethnic and racial diversity. The city should strongly urge consideration of all those factors, both in the housing policies and in the economic vitality policies.

Mr. Mark Webster, 7341 148th Avenue NE, suggested that if housing developments were required to turn over one or two lots to Habitat for Humanity, a step could be taken toward achieving a more diverse community.

Chair Snodgrass closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Allen asked about the phrase “when consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.” Mr. Odle explained that the Economic Vitality Element is aimed primarily at supporting and encouraging businesses. However, the element is not intended to be interpreted as meaning that any business can be located anywhere in the city; the locating of businesses must be in line with the intent of the overall Comprehensive Plan.

It was agreed that the issue should be further discussed by the Commission.

Chair Snodgrass called attention to the third bullet under Policy EV-3 and pointed out a typographical error. It was agreed that “...with manufacturing uses when for...” should read “...with manufacturing uses for...” Chair Snodgrass asked if the manufacturing issues should be deferred until the manufacturing study is completed. Mr. Odle suggested that the two matters could move forward on parallel tracks. He said the intent of the policy is to avoid giving the impression that the city intends to discourage existing manufacturing uses. He agreed that the Commission could hold off making a final recommendation on the Economic Vitality Element until the manufacturing discussion is completed. The schedule will allow for that.

Focusing on Policy EV-5, Chair Snodgrass asked what things the city can do to support the preservation and creation of incubator space. Mr. Odle said one thing the city can do is to have language in the code encouraging the retention of structures as opposed to redevelopment. The city does not want to get into the business of creating and managing such spaces.

Answering a question asked by Chair Snodgrass about Policy EV-6, Mr. Odle explained that the policy is aimed at allowing office buildings to have accessory uses. Chair Snodgrass suggested that some rewording of the policy may be necessary.

Chair Snodgrass asked if Policy EV-4 is aimed at supporting and expanding existing businesses. Mr. Odle said the policy intent is to encourage businesses already located in Redmond to expand and not leave the community as they grow.

Turning to the Housing Element, Commissioner Allen said she would like to see the items highlighted by Mr. Marcy having to do with policies HO-20 and HO-21 and the

housing/jobs balance added to the issues list. She said she most wanted to discuss what will be required of businesses.

Ms. Shirk pointed out that the employer-assisted housing program issue in Policy HO-21 is not mandatory.

Commissioner Querry observed that while the policies call for diversity, there is nothing specific as to what kind of diversity is intended. Ms. Shirk noted that Policy HO-16 speaks about diversity in age, family size and various life changes. Commissioner Querry said there is nothing about ethnicity and other types of diversity. Commissioner Petitpas suggested that the diversity issue could be covered in an introductory paragraph. Commissioner Querry thought that would be appropriate.

The Commission spent a few minutes prioritizing the list of discussion items.

****BREAK****

STUDY SESSION

Grass Lawn Neighborhood Plan

Chair Snodgrass asked the Commissioners to comment with regard to items that should be added to the issues list. He suggested adding the matter of closure hours to the Neighborhood Commercial discussion, and Commissioner Querry proposed expanding the multiplex issue.

With regard to the Neighborhood Commercial issue, Chair Snodgrass noted that the Commission had heard a lot of concern about a specific location on 148th Avenue NE. He held that the response of staff to make the policy more general is the right approach.

Mr. Odle pointed out that the policy does not by right give a person the ability to construct a convenience commercial use; it only allows for someone to make a proposal for a rezone. The rezone action involves a full public process. He said the Commission may want to add to the criteria list, but anyone looking at the criteria should have a clear idea of the intent. The community should also be fully aware of what is not on the table.

Commissioner Petitpas suggested that the criteria should be expanded to include increased closure hours. Mr. Odle noted that the proposed closure hours reflect those established for Convenience Commercial in the Willows/Rose Hill neighborhood.

It was agreed to adopt the staff-recommended language change and revise the hours of operation to include a minimum eight hours closure in every 24-hour period.

Turning to the 9.2-acre Verizon property just to the north of Grass Lawn Park, Mr. Odle said the city has received a request from Verizon to segregate off the approximately 2.2 acres on which the company building stands from the remaining seven acres which the company wishes to sell. A potential purchaser of the site submitted a potential

development proposal to the city outlining their intent to set aside about half of the seven acres in a Native Growth Protection Easement and to construct some 24 single family homes on the balance of the site which is zoned R-5. Parks staff has looked into the issue of acquiring the land for park uses; inquiries have also been made to the Trust for Public Land. Whether or not the land is ultimately developed for housing, the sensitive areas on the site will be protected. There are many competing needs in the city, including areas with no park facilities at all, and a limited pool of financial means to deal with the identified needs. Allowing the site to be developed for housing, protecting the sensitive areas with through a Native Growth Protection Easement, could prove to be the best solution to the problem.

Chair Snodgrass asked if establishing a park priority in the neighborhood plan would trump the Parks, Recreation and Open Space plan, which says nothing about the Verizon site. Mr. Odle answered that it would be wonderful to extend the existing park site, but there must be an overall balancing of city resources. Development of the site under the current set of regulations would in fact achieve much of what the community is asking for. Chair Snodgrass suggested that if the neighborhood wants to pursue their position they should do so before the Parks Board, adding that the best way to address the park issue would be in the Parks, Recreation and Open Space plan.

There was consensus not to expand the language of the neighborhood plan relative to expanding Grass Lawn Park.

With regard to the parking issue, Mr. Odle allowed that staff from the Police Department and Public Works have met with area residents. Grass Lawn Park Phase III has additional parking proposed.

Commissioner Querry asked if neighborhood-only permit parking has been discussed for the area. Mr. Odle said it has been discussed with the local neighborhood. In the conversation it was clear the neighborhood does not necessarily want to move in that direction. The matter has not, however, been removed entirely from being discussed further.

With respect to the issue of increasing housing density in the Grass Lawn neighborhood, Mr. Odle noted that the Commission has not proposed any significant increases. The Verizon site is the largest underdeveloped parcel in the neighborhood. The city's GIS system has been used to identify sites that are yet to be developed and those which could be further developed, but that study was done purely as a theoretical exercise.

Chair Snodgrass asked if all of the multifamily-zoned parcels in the neighborhood built out. Ms. Shirk said there is still a nine-acre property in the R-12 zone that remains undeveloped.

Chair Snodgrass asked where the idea for the NE 80th Street park and closing off the street came from. Ms. Shirk allowed that the area is shown in the Parks, Recreation and Open Space plan as a park. The CAC raised the idea of closing NE 80th Street as a way

of improving the park experience. Concerns with speeding and other traffic issues formed the basis for a number of local residents coming to the Council with a request to close off the street.

Mr. Odle said Public Works initially found that closing the street and reconfiguring the 140th Avenue NE/Redmond Way intersection could be accommodated within the existing right-of-way. Since the CAC completed its work, Public Works has gone back and taken another look at the intersection and concluded that the intersection could not be reconfigured within the existing right-of-way; to purchase additional right-of-way and make the change would cost about \$800,000 more.

Commissioner Allen suggested that the addition of physical traffic calming measures would not be out of order for the street.

Mr. Odle agreed to come back to the Commission with some rewording focused more on the concept of open space, and with more definitive information from Public Works as to what priority closing off the street and reconfiguring the intersection might be given. He said staff would also offer proposed language focused on traffic calming.

With regard to the 148th Avenue NE crossings and connectivity in general, Chair Snodgrass voiced concern over encouraging street crossings between Redmond Way and Old Redmond Road, asking if such crossings would even be feasible by any means other than a pedestrian overcross. Mr. Odle pointed out that the policy is written to encourage exploration of adding crossings in order to make the park more accessible to the community. Additional study may in fact determine that such crossings would not be feasible.

Chair Snodgrass held that the word “explore” does not portray the full sense of seriousness the matter deserves. Mr. Odle agreed to have staff take another look at it and return with proposed language.

Commissioner Query proposed having the issue of connections relative to the park included in one policy, and the more generic issue of connections generally set forth in the transportation section. The other Commissioners concurred.

Chair Snodgrass proposed scheduling a half hour of Commission time to discuss process, including how to go about selecting the committees and the planning that goes into working on the neighborhood plans.

Turning to the issue of concessions in Grass Lawn Park not being translated to policy, Mr. Odle held that the issue is, in fact, covered and is reasonable as proposed.

Commissioner Query commented that concessions policies are not addressed anywhere in the Parks, Recreation and Open Space plan or Parks and Recreation Element of the Comprehensive Plan. She suggested that there should at some time be a discussion about

getting policy language around commercial activities in the parks in the proper documents.

With regard to affordability, Chair Snodgrass commented that because there are general policies related to bonuses and incentives as part of the Housing Element there should be no need to include similar policies in the neighborhood plan. Ms. Shirk thought there could be a reference to the Housing Element policies included in the neighborhood plan. The Commission agreed to defer action on this question until completing their recommendation on the Housing Element.

Mr. Odle said the general direction from the CAC with regard to garage design as viewed from arterials was to de-emphasize the garage front. He said the issue is generally handled on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis as infill and redevelopment occurs.

Chair Snodgrass said the public testimony with regard to multiplexes reinforced what has been heard many times before: the issue of not the number of units but design, siting and quality construction. Commissioner Querry said she has seen examples where multiplex buildings have been designed to blend in very nicely with single family neighborhoods.

There was agreement to leave the section as written.

Mr. Odle said staff was not yet prepared to provide an update with the regard to the Redmond Road improvements.

Chair Snodgrass reiterated that there is no intent to increase the buildout capacity of the Grass Lawn area over and above what is already zoned.

It was agreed that staff should prepare a revised draft of the element in anticipation of the Commission making a final recommendation.

REPORTS

Principal Planner Lori Peckol reported that the City Council on May 25 continued its discussion of the Bear Creek Parkway extension and the various alternatives. The Council indicated a general leaning toward Alternative 1. Additional study sessions on the topic are planned.

On May 24 the meeting was held focused on the proposed interim improvements for 116th.

SCHEDULING/TOPICS FOR NEXT MEETING(S)

Ms. Peckol outlined the items on the agenda for the next meeting.

ADJOURN

Chair Snodgrass adjourned the meeting at 9:49 p.m.

Minutes Approved On:

Recording Secretary
